

NEWS from



Bill Postmus

Supervisor, 1st District

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BOARD O.K.'s ADDITIONAL PLANNING STAFF; POSTMUS CALLS FOR REVIEW OF FEES

SAN BERNARDINO—The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors today approved the addition of 11 new employees to the County's Land Use Services Department—a move that will add two additional planning technicians to the Department's Victorville Office.

First District Supervisor Bill Postmus joined with the rest of the Board in approving the \$402,525 plan to fund the Department for the remainder of the current fiscal year.

The plan will allow the Department to immediately begin the recruiting and hiring process to fill the following positions as early as May 2001:

- Two new planners to be hired out of the Victorville Office;
- Two new planners in San Bernardino;
- One new staff position in Code Enforcement;
- Two additional positions in the Habitat Conservation Program;
- Four additional staff to work on the County's General Plan Update.

During the Board's discussion on the item, Postmus stated his concerns relating fees charged by the Land Use Services Department.

"In the past year I've heard a lot of complaints about the fees this county charges, especially the lot-split and plan-check fees—that they're out of line compared to what other jurisdictions charge," Postmus said after the meeting.

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“For instance, I understand that the County’s Minor Subdivision Fee for two to five parcels requires payment of a \$3,500 fee. That’s three times what Apple Valley charges, four times what Victorville charges, and more than ten times what Hesperia and Adelanto charge.

“I’ve heard from property owners whose residual land values are zero or less because of the excessive costs of regulations and fees. These added costs range from planning and engineering to road, water, sewer and building and safety fees to school mitigation fees and increased utility line extension costs.”

Postmus added that he would like to see an analysis and justification for the Department’s fees and that he would like to see how they compare to those charged by other jurisdictions. Michael Hays, Director of Land Use Services, said a report will be provided at a later date.

“I suspect an analysis will support my belief that our fees are too high and there should be some relief,” Postmus said. “We also need to ensure that we have adequate staff resources to be able to provide the service we are charging people good money for. We need to be able to process their projects in a timely manner—That’s why I supported the additional positions approved today.”

The Board had previously directed that the Department provide a plan for addressing a pressing need for planning technicians that has resulted in a backlog of some 300 land use projects. More than a million dollars in fees have been charged by the Department with little or no work being completed on their applications, according to county officials.

“I voted to add these positions because the county has been holding up projects for too long because of lack of staffing,” Postmus said.

“I think this situation illustrates a real inequity with regard to how we pay for Planning services. It’s a real disservice to property owners and project applicants when the county takes their money and then doesn’t provide the service they’re paying for in a timely manner. Time is money, and when the County takes their money and their time, it’s taking from them twice.”

“Making the County’s fees more equitable and affordable will encourage job growth and economic development, which is a priority in the First District,” Postmus said. “This is definitely something we should take a look at in developing next year’s budget.”

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